

The Royal Challenge

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Summary: Simba is challenged by a cool, hip cub for future rule of the kingdom. Can he pass the three tests and remain the Prince of the Pride Lands?

Chapter 1: Chapter 1: Snapping Out of It

AN: Wow. Thanks for all the reviews on the last story, everyone. Needless to say, you make these stories much more fun to write! So, I happily present the next story.

Jcoll: Yep. That bit about the elephant and the pig *was* a reference to an old *South Park* episode. Somehow I knew you'd bring that up. And it looks like you picked the right story, because we will be seeing a lot more of Mufasa, Sarabi and the other lions in this one. Good for you, huh?

blaurgh: Hatari? As in 'risk'? Well, you never know. So many African names to choose from, so little time... And how come a cub can decide to become the King? Well, you'll see soon enough...

The Royal Challenge

Chapter One: Snapping Out of It

"I'm sorry," Nala said to Simba, a pleading look in her eyes. "I really didn't mean to do all of that to you," she insisted. "And I'm really, really, really, *really* sorry. Can you ever forgive me?"

"No," Simba muttered, rolling onto his stomach, pushing his face into the ground. He wasn't in the mood to speak to Nala after the events of the past few days. Events that were out of his control. "You know what you did was wrong, Nala, and now you'll just have to live with it."

Simba was upset with Nala because for the past three days she and Haiba had made him his slave, all because Simba had found a diamond – a Uchoyo Diamond – which hypnotised anyone who so much as looked at it.

Instantly becoming greedy, Simba enslaved the entire Pride Lands, and would have enslaved the whole world if Haiba hadn't smashed the diamond into a thousand pieces.

Actually, the diamond was controlling Simba; not the other way around. It had *made* him greedy. It was influencing all of his decisions and actions. It made him want more power than anyone else on the planet.

But, after the diamond had been destroyed, its effect backfired, and Simba became completely hypnotised. Nala and Haiba had decided to take advantage of this, and made him do everything they asked him to. He made a very obedient servant...

That is, until Simba snapped out of the trance, and figured out what was going on. Needless to say, he wasn't very happy about it, and was now lying in the corner of the den at Pride Rock, feeling very miserable indeed.

"But it wasn't even my idea!" Nala argued, frowning. "It was Haiba who wanted to make you his slave for the past three days! It's his fault! Not mine! Besides, I didn't even order you around that much."

Simba laughed in response. "Ha! I don't think so, Nala. I'm more tired than I ever have been before in my life! And you're telling me that you *didn't* order me around constantly? That was just a mean thing to do."

"And it was also a mean thing to hypnotise me – your own girlfriend – *and* the entire pride!" Nala retorted, staring at him angrily. "That's just... *evil*! I think you deserved it, if I'm honest."

"But it *wasn't* my fault," Simba replied. "I was being controlled by that stupid diamond. Ever since I saw it, all I could think about was wanting to take care of it. I wanted to take care of it for ever. It was controlling me. Right from the very start. So, when I went into a psycho trance, you decided to make me your slave for three days – instead of trying to help me!"

"What else could we do?" Nala asked, shrugging. "Haiba said we just had to wait until you snapped out of it. There wasn't any way for us to bring you back to normal. So—"

"You decided to make me do everything you wanted me to," Simba finished for her, a disapproving look on his face. "I can't believe you. Do you think if *you* went into a trance then I would do that to you? No. I wouldn't. Face it, Nala – what you did was pretty cruel."

"I've already apologised to you," Nala told him. "How many more times can I say I'm sorry?"

"I'll let you know when you get there," Simba responded.

"Oh, stop being such a grouch!" Nala exclaimed, hitting him playfully on the side. "Why can't we just forget about the

whole thing, Simba?"

"Because you made me feel like an idiot, that's why!" Simba snapped. "I'd *never* do anything like that to you."

"Yeah, you would," Nala mumbled. "You did it the other day."

"I was being controlled!" Simba shouted. "I only did it because the diamond *made* me do it! Can't you get that through your stupid head?"

"Stupid?" Nala exclaimed, her eyes widening. "So now all of a sudden I'm stupid? Just who do you think you're talking to, Mister I-Know-Everything-About-Nothing!"

"You've already called me that before!" Simba retorted.

"So what if I've already called you it?" Nala replied. "I can call you the same thing however many times I—"

She cut herself off when she saw Simba laughing. He was rolling about on the ground, laughing so hard that it hurt his sides. "Simba?" Nala called, glaring at him angrily. "Simba? I am talking to you!"

Simba laughed even harder. "I can't believe you actually fell for it!" he exclaimed through laughter. "You should see yourself! It's hilarious!"

"What are you talking about?" Nala asked, shaking her head in confusion. "Simba, is this a joke or something?"

"Yes!" he replied, sighing as his laughter finally came to a halt. "Oh, Nala, I'm not *really* mad at you. I was just kidding," he explained, smiling. "It's no big deal. Really. I'm fine with it – even if you *have* made me feel like I could sleep for years."

Nala seemed to become even angrier. "Why you... You... *You*... Oh, come here!" she cried, hugging him as tight as she could, almost crushing him. "Simba, I'm so glad to have you back! I've been worrying for ever and ever and ever and—"

"Nala... you're... crushing... my spine..." Simba said, struggling to escape Nala's tight hug.

"Oh." Nala let go of him. "Sorry," she said. "I'm just glad that we're together again. No more problems... right?"

Simba smiled and nodded at her. "Of course," he agreed. "There were never any problems to begin with. It's just that lots of things seem to be getting into my head lately." He shrugged. "It's not exactly in my control."

"That's okay, you silly cub," Nala said, putting a paw around his shoulder. "Just don't ever leave me again. Okay?"

"Okay," Simba replied with a nod. "So long as *you* promise not to take advantage of me the next time I'm in a deep trance? Got it?"

Nala giggled. "Yeah. Got it." She looked towards the outside of the den, and then at Simba. "So, do you feel like doing anything today, sleepy-head? Or are we just going to sit here all day doing nothing? I warn you – our brains might melt out of boredom if you pick the second option."

Simba chuckled. Nala could be so funny sometimes. Yet another reason why he loved her so much. She was wonderful, and she was beautiful. She was his best friend. His girlfriend. His Princess.

Simba shrugged in response. "I don't really mind," he told her. "Just so long as I'm with you."

Nala smiled, feeling her heart warm. *Yep*, she thought. *Back to normal, all right.*

Chapter 2: Chapter 2: You Are Forgiven

Chapter Two: You Are Forgiven

"Simba..." Mufasa glared at his son as he approached him, an unhappy look on his face. "I need to ask you a question."

Simba winced. His father had caught him as he and Nala were on their way out of the den. It was something Simba certainly didn't want to happen. After all, when he was under the control of the Uchoyo Diamond, he had tied up his father in the middle of the jungle, and it apparently took him until the following morning to escape. He didn't think his father would be very happy...

"Um... Dad... I – I c-can explain..." Simba stammered, a worried look on his face. He was going to be grounded *for ever*. He *knew* it. "It's all just a big misunderstanding, I—"

"Are you okay?" Mufasa asked his son, looking concerned. "I expect you must be tired after the events of the past few days."

"*What?*" Simba's eyes widened, unable to mask his surprise. He *wasn't* in trouble? Well... that was just rare! "You... You mean you're not going to disown me or anything?"

Mufasa chuckled in response. "No, son. I know the reason for your actions the other day. That friend of yours – Haiba – explained it to me."

"He *did*?" said Simba, sounding surprised. *Maybe that's a little reward for being his slave*, he thought.

Mufasa nodded. "Yes, Simba. So don't worry – you won't get into any trouble for what you did. Let's just hope that there aren't any more of those Uchoyo Diamonds around..."

With that, he left, leaving Simba and Nala on their own. "I must be the luckiest cub in the world," Simba told Nala. "Stuff like that just doesn't happen. If my Dad *killed* me then it would be more likely than him telling me that I wasn't going to get in any trouble." He shrugged at her. "Maybe things are looking up."

As Simba and Nala walked out of the den together, they saw Haiba striding up to him. "Hey, Simba," he called. "Don't be mad at me. I've got this whole thing worked out. You see, I talked to your Dad and—"

"I know," Simba interrupted. "You told him all about that business with the diamond, didn't you?" He nodded. "Yep. I'm actually *glad* you explained it to him, otherwise my Dad probably would have exiled me from the kingdom, and that would have meant saying bye-bye to becoming the King."

"So we can put all of this nasty business behind us?" Haiba presumed, before glancing at Nala. "I see you and Nala are back together. You have no idea how much she was worrying while you were stuck in that hypnotic trance. It was always, 'Haiba, you shouldn't make Simba do that,' and 'Haiba, you shouldn't make Simba do this.' She must really care about you."

Simba looked a little surprised. "You mean she was worried about me? But I thought you two were just making me do whatever you wanted me to. I thought I was just your slave."

"Well... I'll admit that I went a little nuts with it," said Haiba. "But Nala really wasn't into controlling you all that much. She didn't like seeing you hypnotised. Trust me – it gets a little freaky after a while."

"It *felt* freaky," Simba told him. "While I was hypnotised, all I could think was how much I wanted to serve you. And then, as soon as I snapped out of it, all those feelings went away. It was really weird."

Haiba shrugged. "That's the power of the diamond, I guess. It gets inside your head. Messes with you. It makes me wonder how an inanimate object has low level psychic abilities. I met a psychic princess once – needless to say, she was never surprised. But I'm pretty sure that diamond isn't just a product of nature. Do you know what I think?"

Simba and Nala shook their heads. "No," Nala replied. "What *do* you think, Haiba?"

"I think it was made by somebody," Haiba revealed. "I think it was *invented*. Like... they wanted to use it as some kind of weapon."

Nala looked a little confused. "But who would want to invent something like that? It doesn't make much sense to me."

"I can think of a few people..." Simba muttered, staring down at the ground. He knew only one lion who had the power to

create something like that... "But unless they can come back from the dead, I'm stumped."

"Looks like it'll always remain a mystery," Haiba said. "And that's a shame, too. I like uncovering lost secrets. Oh, well. There's plenty of other mysteries out there to solve."

"So what about today?" Nala asked. "Can you smell any adventure lurking around the corner, Simba?"

"Nope," Simba replied, shaking his head. "If I could smell adventure, then I'd be running towards it all the time. But you'd have to be some kind of *god* to smell things like that..."

"I actually have a highly developed sense of smell," Haiba told them. "Although it only really works when you want to smell out wild Mambo beasts."

"Wild *what* beasts?" Nala exclaimed, her eyes widening.

"Wild Mambo beasts," Haiba repeated. "Tiny little things. Live in caves. They look really cute from the outside, but that's just an act. You befriend them, only for them to rip your head off when you close your eyes to go to sleep. They multiply in water, too. Pretty nasty guys, if you ask me."

"Let's just hope we don't run into them..." Nala said. "So no one's got a plan?" She sighed. "I hate it when it's boring."

"It's a lot safer, you know," said a voice from behind them.

The three cubs turned around to face Zazu, who was perched on a large rock, his wings folded. "What do you want, Zazu?" Simba grumbled. "Haven't you got better things to do than lecture us?"

"I'm just saying," Zazu replied. "How would you feel if one of you got killed during your rambunctious outings?"

"Come on, Zazu," said Simba, taking a step towards him. "Are you telling me that *you've* never been in a deadly situation before?"

"Several, actually," Zazu responded. "There was that time when the Pride Lands were enslaved, and I helped you reclaim them."

Nala chuckled, rolling her eyes. "Yeah, right. You just stood there while Simba did all the work."

"Um..." Zazu thought for a moment. "Well, there was that other time where I was put in charge of the kingdom for the day."

"And you chickened out while we fought the bad guys," Simba retorted. "Face it, Zazu – you're just a coward."

"How *dare* you?" Zazu exclaimed, sounding offended. "I've been very heroic on *several* occasions, you furry little oaf! In fact, there was this one time with my father when..." He sighed. "I won't go into details about that right now, but I still consider myself brave!"

"Whatever, Zazu," Simba muttered, before turning away from him. "We're going to go off and have adventures of our own, while... you do all those brave things you claim to have done. See ya!"

With that, the three cubs raced off, leaving Zazu by himself. "Sometimes I wonder why I even bother," he said, shaking his head.

AN: There's a little mystery with Zazu. Clever reader will have figured it out by now, but you'll have to wait a while for the answers. I just *love* a good secret! Another reason for me being a big tease, huh? Oh, well. You'll get more tomorrow. Simba's about to finally meet his match... Think Haiba, but ten times worse! Ha-ha-ha...

Chapter 3: Chapter 3: Hila the Confident Cub

AN: Time to meet yet another selfish antagonists. Those... evil... meanies!

Niche Eenhoorn: It actually doesn't take that long to write these. Maybe one hour a chapter, or something like that. Besides, I don't mind. This is fun – and certainly not a chore. I assume my quality is good? Because if it is, then that's great!

blaurgh: Nice translations again. And don't worry about the Uchoyo Diamond. It's not coming back. But its *inventor* just might...

Chapter Three: Hila the Confident Cub

Hila was cool. More than cool. *Beyond* cool, if such a thing were possible. No one was cooler. Anyone who said so was a liar. The biggest liar in the world. Hila had said so himself. Everyone listened to him. Everyone looked up to him like he was some kind of god. Which he believed he *was*, of course. Born to be a god. Born to be a hero. Born to be a *king*. A very cool, calm, confident and collected king. He truly believed that. And everyone from his home – the Sly Lands – believed that, too.

But, unfortunately for Hila, there was *already* a King of the Sly Lands – Hila's older brother, and he wasn't going to give up his kingdom any time soon. The kingdom wasn't that good, anyway. Hila knew that there were certainly much better places for a grand cub like himself to live in.

Such as the Pride Lands, for example. Oh, *everyone* talked about the Pride Lands. "It's the best place in the world to live," they'd say. "You'll never find anywhere better."

So it didn't take very long for Hila to put two and two together. He should go to the Pride Lands. He was going to go to the Pride Lands – and make himself the King. It wouldn't be too hard of a task. After all, he was a *god*.

Hila knew all about the Pride Lands, inside and out – particularly about its laws. The great and mighty kingdom – ruled by King Mufasa – had many, many laws; all of them devised by the King and his royal advisor. Each and every one of these laws ensured that the Pride Lands were safe, secure and fair.

That is, all except for one. There was one small, ancient, insignificant law that stood out like a giant elephant in the middle of an empty field. The law had been forgotten for years and years. It had first been devised by Mufasa's father – Ahadi – who wasn't exactly the best King to ever rule the Pride Lands.

The Pride Lands suffered bad times under his rule, and his two sons weren't exactly inspired by him either. Mufasa had strived to be a much better King than his father ever was. Taka – more commonly known as Scar – had suffered severe mental problems after being abused by his father, which resulted in him becoming one of the most feared enemies of the Pride Lands. Of course, the person who murdered Scar was even *more* feared...

And King Ahadi had created this one law, because he liked a challenge. He *loved* to make people think they could beat him. He thrived off of it. This one law was invented purely for his own entertainment, and had long since been forgotten.

However, the law had become so obscure that no one – not even the King – had decided to abolish it. It was lost – just waiting for someone to exploit it. Someone like Hila. He wanted to exploit this law, and make himself the King. The Prince would no longer become the King; instead, Hila would, fulfilling his own prophecy: that he would become a king.

Hila made his way into the Pride Lands, and inhaled the fresh air. It smelled a lot cleaner than the Sly Lands – not as much mud and dirt – and it took on a much more proud appearance. Particularly Pride Rock – there weren't any other prides with a landmark like *that*.

Everything looks so wonderful, Hila thought with a smile. *And soon it'll all be mine. I'll be the King, and I'll get to pick a beautiful cub to be my Queen.* He grinned. *This will be easy. Too easy.*

Hila chuckled to himself, and made his way towards the water hole. It was time that he found himself a few subjects for support...

"Simba, what are you doing?" Nala asked, upon seeing Simba doing some press-ups on the ground. "You look ridiculous."

"I'm exercising," Simba replied, continuing to do the press-ups. "You're right – I eat too much." He stood up, patting his stomach for added effect. "Like you said before – just *look* at that belly!"

"Nothing wrong with a big belly, Simba," Haiba commented, standing over the edge of the water hole, swishing the water around with his paw. "I always wanted to go out with a bit of a chubby cub." He shrugged. "Maybe there's some around here I can sniff out."

"Depends if you like them stupid or *really* stupid," Simba joked. "All the other cubs are complete idiots. Me and Nala tried to make friends with them, and they hated us both. Well, I did lie to them a little bit, but my Uncle Scar told me to! And how's he doing right now? Oh, yeah – he's dead!"

"Oh, I don't know..." Haiba muttered, as he stared across the water hole. "Looks like someone's making friends right now."

"What do you mean?" Nala asked, as she and Simba headed over to the edge of the water hole, following Haiba's gaze.

Across the water hole, a cub with golden-brown fur and sneaky green eyes was talking to some of the other cubs. They all seemed to be listening very intently to him. "Who the heck is that?" Simba asked, his eyes widening. "I've never seen him around here before."

"*Please* tell me we can investigate this," Haiba pleaded. "I'm just raring for some conflict around here. So far the day has been pretty boring, to say the least."

"You think we're not going to investigate a mysterious new cub?" said Simba, raising an eyebrow at Haiba. "What kind of heroes do you take us for?"

"Then let's get over there," said Nala, heading around the water hole to see what all the commotion was about. Whatever it was, it was sure to be interesting. New arrivals *always* sparked interest.

The three cubs ducked behind a low bush, their heads poking out over the top. "So who do you think it is?" Haiba whispered, his eyes fixed on the new cub.

"What's he saying?" Nala asked, trying to listen to the conversation this cub was having with all the others.

"... So then I decided to challenge the Prince for future rule of the kingdom," the cub told them all, sounding very full of himself. "I mean, he's a little jerk – it's sure to be easy."

"Yeah – that Simba guy is just a dummy," one cub agreed. "He's never done anything for any of us."

"*What?*" Simba exclaimed as he listened to their conversation. "You've got to be kidding me! I'm going to give them a piece of my mind!" Simba hopped over the bush, and started heading towards the cubs. "Hey, who are you calling a dummy?"

"This isn't going to end well," Haiba remarked, following Simba, with Nala walking alongside him.

"Hey, there!" the new cub greeted Simba, shaking him by the paw. "I shake you warmly by the paw. I like to be friendly towards members of the royal family I'm about to overthrow."

Three female cubs sighed deeply, staring at the new cub with smitten looks on their faces. "He's so dreamy..."

"Wait, wait," said Simba, waving his forepaws in the air. "Just what the heck are you all talking about?"

"Well – how rude of me – allow me to introduce myself," the cub said, smiling at Simba. "My name is Hila, and I'm here to take part in the challenge."

Nala raised an eyebrow at him. "Challenge?" she said, a confused look on her face. "What challenge?"

"The Royal Challenge."

Chapter 4: Chapter 4: Zazu Gets It Wrong

Chapter Four: Zazu Gets It Wrong

"The Royal Challenge has been around for years and years," Hila explained as he, Simba, Nala and Haiba walked into the den. "It was invented by King Ahadi – King Mufasa's father – for the specific purpose of entertaining him. I'm surprised you don't know about it, actually. You're pretty stupid for the Prince of the Pride Lands."

"That's it!" Simba went to attack Hila, but Nala blocked his path.

"Wait, Simba, wait," said Nala, calming him down. "Don't do something you'll regret. Look, I know what we can do."

"And so do I!" Simba declared, extending his claws and trying to get past Nala, who just held him in place. For a girl, she was pretty strong... "Where did you learn to stop people from moving like that?"

"Mother knows best," Nala replied, smiling. "Especially in the case of *my* mother. Now, Simba, don't you think we should hear this guy out first before you do anything rash?"

"Why? He's a jerk!" Simba exclaimed, glaring at Hila angrily. "And what's this Royal Challenge thing? And what has it got to do with me?"

"Well, you silly idiot, it involves you because you're the *Prince*," Hila replied. "That's the whole point of the Royal Challenge."

"I'm waiting for you to get to the part where you explain what the Royal Challenge actually *is*," said Haiba, sounding impatient. "Cause so far, you've hardly said anything. So, come on – start talking."

Hila sighed, rolling his eyes. "Fools," he muttered under his breath, before looking up at the three cubs. "The Royal Challenge is... a contest, if you will. It allows a cub – say, *me* – to challenge a Prince – say, *you* – for future rule of the kingdom."

"No way!" Simba said, shaking his head. "Who would be stupid enough to invent a stupid thing like that?"

"Your father's father," Hila responded. "He wasn't a very good King, explaining why he invented this law in the first place, and—"

"Wait a sec," said Nala, waving a paw in the air. "It was a *law*?"

Hila nodded. "Yeah. Anyone can do it. It was never officially abolished – that means that no one ever got rid of it – so it still stands today. So, I'm here to challenge you, Prince Simba, for future rule of the kingdom."

"Well, you can forget it," Simba told him, frowning. "I've already had a bad week, and I'm not in the mood to deal with a stupid guy like you."

"I'm afraid you *have* to, Simba," Hila informed him. "If you don't accept the challenge, then that means you forfeit, and I will become the new Prince. I can kick your family right out of here."

"No fair!" Simba exclaimed, his eyes widening. "You can't do that!"

"Yes, I can," said Hila, a self-satisfying smile on his face. "It's the law."

Simba growled angrily, his face turning red. "Why, you little—"

"Now, where would I find the King?" Hila wondered, heading out of the den. "I need to find him so we can organise the Royal Challenge."

"Did someone say the Royal Challenge?" said a nervous voice from above them.

Hila looked up to see Zazu, who fluttered down to the ground, looking worried. "Yes, I did say the Royal Challenge," Hila told the hornbill.

Zazu chuckled nervously in response. "Why would a cub like you be mentioning the Royal Challenge? That's just a... legend."

"Zazu, why do you sound so worried?" King Mufasa joined Zazu by his side. "Are you getting worked up over the elephant

population again?"

"No..." Zazu replied, looking up at the King. "I just heard this cub mention..." He gulped, fearing Mufasa's reaction. "The Royal Challenge."

"What?" Mufasa looked stunned, his eyes widening.

"Yeah," said Simba, looking up at his father. "This guy somehow thinks he can challenge me for future rule of the Pride Lands." He laughed. "But that's just stupid – *isn't* it?"

Mufasa looked down at his royal advisor. "Zazu, you did thoroughly abolish all of the old, unnecessary rules of the kingdom, didn't you? I thought I asked you to do that years ago – before Simba was even born."

Zazu chuckled in response. "Well... I have been meaning to tell you about this for quite some time, but I never really got round to it. You see... I *forgot* about one little law in particular. *This* one. I apologise sincerely, sire."

"Oh, no..." Mufasa shook his head and closed his eyes. "Zazu, how could you? The Royal Challenge should have been one of the *first* laws to be abandoned. I can't believe you acted so carelessly."

"So it's *true*?" said Nala, a concerned look on her face. "Simba really *can* be challenged for future ownership of the kingdom?"

Mufasa sighed, a solemn look on his face. "I'm afraid so. It was one of my father's laws – him and I weren't very close – and I wanted to get rid of it as quickly as possible. I thought I did – until *now*, of course," he explained, shooting Zazu an angry glare.

"What's all the commotion, Mufasa?" Sarabi asked, joining her mate by his side.

"Simba's going to undertake the Royal Challenge," Mufasa replied.

Sarabi screamed at the top of her voice and fell to the ground, unconscious.

Simba stared down at his motionless mother, a worried look on his face. "Somehow I don't think this Royal Challenge is going to be easy."

Zazu slowly walked away. "I think I'll go and serve my punishment for forgetting to organise the laws properly – five hours of merciless tickling."

"Make that *ten* hours," Mufasa added.

"How come the Pride Lands don't kill people as a punishment?" Nala asked, a curious look on her face. "Why do they tickle you instead?"

"Do you know how unpleasant it would be to kill people every time they broke a rule?" Mufasa replied. "Tickling is a far more suitable punishment – it takes a lot longer, for a start. And it lasts for however long you want it to. Unless, of course, I sentence someone to *death* by tickling."

"So who's the tickler?" Zazu asked, a worried look on his face. "The gophers or the monkeys?"

"Hmm..." Mufasa thought for a moment. "The monkeys," he decided.

Zazu let out a huge groan. "Oh, no, sire, not the monkeys! They always know what the best spots to tickle are!"

"It's your fault," was Mufasa's reply.

"Oh, I just hope they don't go for under the wings," Zazu said quietly, before flying off to his punishment. *Why do I have to be ticklish?*

"So what kind of things do you have to do for the Royal Challenge?" Simba asked.

"Three tests," Hila replied. "Skill, intelligence and courage – each and every one of them deadly. It takes all you've got just to survive."

"And I *have* to do this?" Simba exclaimed. "Don't I even get any help?"

"Oh, you get your friends for moral support," Hila told him. "But that's about it, really. Other than that, you're on your own."

He then smiled. "It doesn't matter to me, though. I can do anything. I'll win for sure." He turned to Nala. "And when I do, then I know who I'm gonna pick to be my Queen."

"In your dreams," Nala retorted, staring back at Hila angrily. "I'm sticking with Simba," she told him firmly.

Hila chuckled in response. "I don't think so," he said, reaching out with a paw and stroking Nala softly on the cheek. "I'm going to betroth us, so we'll *have* to be together. You're hot, I'm hot. What the heck? We can have a good make-out session once in a while."

Nala felt like striking Hila right on the face, but she held herself back. Simba would win this Royal Challenge. She was sure of it. He'd win and he would make sure that this cub would never ever bother them again.

Simba turned to Hila. "So what's the first test?"

AN: Poor Zazu. Ten hours of tickling. I shudder at the thought... But Hila is a big jerk, isn't he? Let's just hope Simba can overcome these three extremely deadly challenges. It's either that or saying bye-bye to being the Prince! Oh, no!

Chapter 5: Chapter 5: The Test of Skill

AN: Time for Simba to face the deadly tests of the Royal Challenge. Can he win?

arianastar1519: You know how to catch me out, don't you? Baridi was in fact the original name for Hila. But then I decided to change it, because Hila sounds much cooler – which suits the character, don't you think so?

Cylocrux: You liked my version of Ahadi? Well, he's just another one of my little mysteries, which will connect to one *big* mystery that will be solved later on in the series. I just *love* a tragic background!

Chapter Five: The Test of Skill

"Skill... From the looks of things, Simba, I doubt you'll be able to win this test," Hila said to Simba, a confident smile on his face.

Simba, Nala, Haiba, Hila, Mufasa and Sarabi had all gathered in the middle of a grassy field, which was where the first test was to be held. Hila was the challenger, so he got to choose the first test. He had decided on the test of skill. Being extremely confident, he knew that Simba wouldn't be able to win this. Then, all he had to do was win at least one more challenge, and the kingdom would be his for ever.

"So what do we have to do?" Simba asked, ignoring Hila's insult towards him. This cub just seemed to thrive on insulting people. Already he was sick of it. "Unless of course you have some more bullying to do."

"I don't bully anyone," Hila stated. "I'm just exercising my assertiveness as a king. Your *future* king."

Simba frowned. Was this guy really convinced that he was going to become the new King of the Pride Lands? Over his dead body. Simba wasn't going to let him have it. He was going to win this Royal Challenge, and make sure Hila never set a paw in the kingdom ever again. "Yeah, of course you don't bully people. Now explain to me what the first test is."

"Oh, that's very simple," Hila told him. "Tell me, Simba – how good are your climbing skills?"

"Great," Simba replied almost instantly. "I can climb anything. I've been doing it since for ever."

"Well, the first tests is all about skill – in this case, your *climbing* skills. You see that tree over there?" Hila pointed to the centre of the field.

At the end of the field was a huge tree. Perhaps the tallest one in the Pride Lands. It dominated the large field, and was so tall that Simba thought it went past the clouds. He was supposed to climb *this*? "Yeah," Simba replied. "I see it. So we're supposed to climb it – right?"

"Climb *that*?" Nala's eyes widened. "How does that even prove that you're skilled enough to be the King? It makes no sense!"

"Shut up," Hila snapped. "Listen to your future King. Now, the point of this is to prove that your skilled and clever enough to overcome tall obstacles – such as this tree. It's the tallest one in the Pride Lands, and it'll take all you've got to get to the top."

"So it's a race?" Simba presumed. "Whichever one of us gets to the top wins. Am I right?" he asked.

"Not quite," Hila replied, shaking his head. "You see, you have to rescue the person trapped at the top of the tree, and bring them safely down to the ground. The Royal Challenge is supposed to be deadly, you know."

Haiba shot Hila a look. "So who's this person at the top?" he asked.

Everyone stared back at him. "Why are you all looking at me?"

"I cannot believe you're allowed to do this," Haiba said, once Hila had finished tying him to the top branch of the tree with vines, so he was hanging upside down. Already he felt dizzy. "I feel like my brain is about to come pouring out of my ears. Are you sure you'll be able to rescue me *before* my head explodes?"

"Nope," came the simple reply from Hila. "There are no promises in the Royal Challenge. Just be hopeful, and then you just might make it out of this alive."

Haiba raised an eyebrow at him. "Just what is your plan?" he asked. "Why do you think you even *deserve* to become the King?"

"Because I am a god," Hila replied. "And a god *must* also be a king. So, what better king can you be than the King of the Pride Lands? It's a match made in heaven. Don't you think so?"

"No," Haiba said. "I think it's sick. *You're* sick. Are you sure your mother didn't drop you on your head when you were a baby?"

"I could say the same of you," said Hila.

"She *did* drop me on my head," Haiba informed him. "But I'm still smart enough to know that I'm no god. You're just insane – like most of the other psychos I've met around here. You need help."

"I need to *win*," Hila stated. "Without this, I'm nothing. So, try not to make this too difficult for me, and I just might give you a reward."

"Does that reward involve you moving your butt out of here?" Haiba quipped with a smile. "'Cause that'd be great!"

Hila ignored him, and began to make his way slowly back down the tree, his mind focused on how he was going to beat Simba at this test.

"So how come you got to take him up there?" Simba asked, once Hila had climbed down from the giant tree.

"Because I'm the challenger," Hila replied. "And that gives me special priority. If you weren't so foolish then you'd know that."

"Can we just do this?" Simba said, just about ready to tear Hila's head off. That arrogant little brat deserved nothing, as far as he was concerned. "I want to get this stupid Royal Challenge over and done with."

"Very well," Hila said, joining Simba by his side. He looked at Nala, Mufasa and Sarabi. "All of you, step back. Stay too close to the competitors and that might just count as cheating."

"Good luck, son," Mufasa said to Simba, backing away along with Nala and Sarabi.

"Don't lose!" Nala advised.

Sarabi opened her mouth to say something, but fell to the ground, unconscious again.

"You ready?" Hila asked, staring at Simba.

Simba's eyes remained fixed on the tree. "Oh, I'm ready, all right," he told him, a determined look on his face.

"Then let's do this." Hila took a deep breath. "Three... two... one... *go!*"

Simba raced off towards the tree. He was going to beat Hila to the top. He was going to make it look easy.

He hopped up onto one branch, and began to quickly scale the tree, using all of his skill. He chuckled, and looked down, only to realise something very, *very* strange.

Hila hadn't moved. He was still stood in his original spot, not having moved a single muscle. *What is he doing?* Simba wondered, a confused look on his face. *Why's he just standing there?*

Simba shook his head. *Forget it. It's his loss.* He continued on his journey, climbing from branch to branch, his only goal being to get to the top and rescue Haiba. *I'm going to do it,* Simba realised, a triumphant smile on his face. *There's no way Hila can beat me now! He's done for!*

He quickly glanced down, and saw that Hila still stood in the same spot. He looked back up at the tree, not noticing the sneaky smile on Hila's face...

Simba finally got to the top of the tree, and found Haiba dangling from the top branch, tied up with vines. "Finally!" Haiba exclaimed. "I've been waiting five minutes for you to get here!"

Still with a sneaky smile on his face, Hila walked over to the tree, and gave the trunk a mighty whack with his paw.

The tree rattled slightly, and the vines that held Haiba to the branch snapped, sending him hurtling towards the ground below.

He screamed as he fell, only to be caught by Hila, who gently lowered him to the ground. "There we go," he said, smiling. "You're safe and sound." He grinned. "I win."

"You *win*?" Nala exclaimed, walking over to Hila's side. "You didn't even climb the tree! Simba should have won!"

"Actually, that's where you're wrong," said Hila, shaking his head and smiling. "The rules never specifically stated that I had to *climb* the tree. I just had to rescue the person at the top, and make sure they landed on the ground safely. I rescued Haiba, and now he's safely on the ground. So I win. Any more questions?"

Nala growled loudly. "Why, you little—"

Hila walked off. "Time for the next test, I think," he said, knowing that the kingdom would soon be under his control.

Chapter 6: Chapter 6: The Test of Intelligence

Chapter Six: The Test of Intelligence

"I don't believe it!" Simba exclaimed, staring at Hila angrily. "I thought the whole point of that test was to climb the tree! And now you're telling me that it *wasn't*?"

"I never said it *was* the point in the first place," Hila retorted. "I simply said that you had to rescue the person from the top. I never said anything about climbing. That means I've got one point. One more and I'll be running the kingdom – and I can kick you *and* your family out of here."

"I think he's just a cheat," Nala mumbled, a frown on her face. Hila really was a big, dumb jerk. She hoped he got trampled to death by an elephant. "So what's this next stupid test, then?"

"You're only calling it stupid because your pathetic excuse for a Prince is losing," Hila told her, enraging Nala even more. "But if you must know, then the next test is the test of intelligence. You'll have to use all your brainpower if you want to overcome this tricky test."

"So what do we have to do? Fight each other with psychic powers or something?" Simba asked.

Hila slapped a paw to his face. "You really are an idiot..." he muttered, before looking at Simba. "There are no physical requirements for this test. All you need is a decent amount of intelligence – which means I'm obviously going to win this. It's very simple: I'm going to ask you a riddle, and if you get it right then you win. If you get it wrong, then *I* win. Understand?"

"Yeah," Simba replied. "I understand. So what's the riddle?"

"Hmm..." Hila put a paw to his chin, a thoughtful look on his face. "I need to think of one that'll *really* challenge you."

"He's going to cheat," Haiba said, watching Hila as he thought. "I know it. He's just going to make something up – something you won't even know the answer to. I've seen jerks like him before – they'll do anything just to win."

Simba shrugged at him. "Just what am I supposed to do?" he asked. "If I give up, then that means he gets the kingdom. Believe me, this isn't exactly my idea of a fun-filled day. I'd rather do *nothing*." He looked up at his father. "Dad, any advice?"

Mufasa shook his head at his son. "I'm afraid not, Simba. This devious cub seems to have thoroughly done his research on the Royal Challenge. It's all up to you to try and beat him. Regretfully, I can't offer any assistance."

"Great," Simba muttered, rolling his eyes. "What about you, Mom?" he asked his mother. "Got any helpful ideas?"

Sarabi's eyes rolled into the back of her head, and she fainted again. "Why does she keep doing that?" Nala asked, staring down at her motionless body.

"Let's just say that she wasn't exactly very fond of my father and his laws," Mufasa replied. "He scared her a lot during our cubhood. I'm actually still quite surprised that she remained my friend, considering that I was related to him."

"Was your father really *that* bad?" Haiba asked, raising an eyebrow. "Just how scary can one lion be?"

"You never met Hago," Simba replied, a frown on his face. "It's his fault that I can't ever sleep at night."

"Hago?" Haiba raised an eyebrow at Simba. "Funny. That was the name of my mother's—"

"I've got it!" Hila exclaimed, a grin on his face. "The ultimate riddle! One that you'll never be able to get! The riddle that will make sure I'm the King of the Pride Lands before the day is out!"

"Do you have to brag all the time?" Simba asked, staring at Hila with an unimpressed look on his face. He was by far the most annoying cub Simba had ever met. Even worse than Moto. Well, *before* he had taken Nala from him... "It's getting really annoying."

"No need to be jealous," said Hila. "Just because I'm better than you in every way doesn't make me better than you in every way."

Nala had a confused look on her face. "Wait, but that doesn't make any—"

"So, are you ready for the riddle, Simba?" Hila asked. "I warn you – it just might make your tiny brain explode."

"Bring it on," said Simba. "I can handle anything you can dish out. So come on – tell me this riddle."

Hila smiled. "Here goes: a lion rides into a pride. It takes him eighteen hours to get there, and eighteen hours to get back. He does this all on Sunday. How?"

"Wait, wait, wait," said Simba, shaking his head. "What does that mean? Say the last part again."

"Not a chance," replied Hila, his smile widening. *He's doomed*, he thought. *There's no way he'll be able to figure that out.* "Answer it correctly, or the kingdom is mine."

"But it makes no sense!" Simba exclaimed. "There's only twenty-four hours in a day! You can't take eighteen hours to get into a pride, and eighteen hours to get back! That's *more* than twenty-four hours!"

"That's why it's called a riddle," said Hila. "You have to figure it out. That's the point. Better start thinking."

"Why, I oughta..." Simba raised a paw, his claws extended, an angry look on his face. He sighed, closing his eyes.

"Okay, Simba. You can work this out," he told himself. "You can work this out..."

"So a lion's *riding* into a pride?" said Haiba, looking a little confused. "Why can't he just walk? *Another* thing that makes no sense. I think he's just making it up. I can tell by the look in his eyes."

"I'm not doing anything," said Hila with a shrug. "I'm just waiting for Simba to give me an answer – the *wrong* answer – so I can become the King."

"Wait..." Simba opened his eyes, a look of realisation on his face. "I think I've got it. I think I know what the answer is."

Hila suppressed a snicker. "Really?" he said, doubting that Simba had the correct answer at all. "Okay, then, Simba – what is the answer?"

"Well, if a lion rides into a pride, and it takes him eighteen hours to get there, and eighteen hours to get back, all on Sunday... then Sunday must be the name of his elephant," Simba finished.

Hila's eyes widened, and a stunned look appeared on his face. "What... What did you say?"

"Sunday's the name of his elephant," Simba repeated, a proud smile on his face.

"But... how... how did you...?" Hila was lost for words. Simba was supposed to be dumb! He didn't have any intelligence at all! How could he possibly know the answer to that?

"That means I get one point," Simba declared, grinning. "Not looking so confident now, are you, Hila?"

"But... I... And you..." Hila sighed. "Oh, forget it. There's still one more test to go, and it's the toughest test of them all."

An evil grin spread across Hila's face. "The test of courage."

AN: The test of courage? That doesn't sound too good. This Royal Challenge is about to get ten times worse. And Hila isn't going to let Simba win so easily. That poor cub's got his work cut out for him. I guess I'll see you tomorrow for the exciting, show-stopping, climatic ending!

Chapter 7: Chapter 7: The Test of Courage

AN: Can Simba beat the test of courage? It's all downhill from here...

arianastar1529: Nice mystery detecting skills you've got. All might just be revealed...

kora22: Yeah. Simba's smarter than you think, huh?

Chapter Seven: The Test of Courage

"The test of courage is by far the worst of them all," said Hila, as he walked through a field, followed by Simba, Nala, Haiba, Mufasa and Sarabi. "To overcome it, it will require not only your skill and intelligence, but all of the courage you've got."

"What do I have to do?" Simba asked, unaffected by how dangerous Hila was making this test out to be. Simba had been heroic – far too many times – so this shouldn't be too difficult at all.

"Well... this is going to sound kinda complicated, but..." Hila stared at Simba. "I'm going to need a magical lion."

Simba sighed. "What about a cub?"

In the middle of the jungle, Tama slept peacefully, a smile on her face. Tojo had gone out to try and get them some food for the evening, so she was just relaxing, not a care in the world...

Well, until she was grabbed by someone, and dragged away...

Tama's eyes flickered open, and she was surprised to see Simba standing over her. "Simba...?" She groggily got to her paws. "What are you...? What happened?"

"Um..." Simba looked a little nervous. "Well, you see, I've got a problem – a *big* problem – and I need your help."

"I need your help," declared Hila, walking over to her. "You must be Tama – the magical cub?"

Tama nodded. "Yeah. Why? What do you want from me? Because if you think I'm gonna help you take over the world, then you've got another thing coming!"

Hila chuckled in response, shaking his head. "No, no, no. I don't want the world. I just want the kingdom. Am I not merciful? And this is all completely legal. It says so in the law of the Pride Lands."

"I am going to *kill* Zazu for forgetting to get rid of that law," Simba muttered, an angry look on his face. So far, his day hadn't been going too well, to say the least. He just wanted it all to end.

"So what is all of this about?" Tama asked, feeling a little confused.

"Simba and I are taking part in the Royal Challenge," Hila explained. "Now, the Royal Challenge has been around for years, and it allows a cub like me to challenge Simba for future rule of the kingdom. You face three tests, and whoever gets two points wins."

"But what has this got to do with me?" said Tama. "I have to admit, I find this a little confusing. But that's probably because I've been sleeping for hours. I lose a lot of my intelligence when I sleep. Which is kinda strange, if you think about it..."

"Well, this test requires a spot of magic," Hila told her. "And I'm told that you're the only magical cub around these parts, so we brought you here."

"Just how deadly *is* this test?" asked Nala, taking a step towards Hila. "It sounds really serious."

"It *is* really serious," Hila insisted. "And it just so happens that you – Nala – are going to be a crucial part of it." He turned to Tama. "Tama, I want you to give Nala the Unyevu disease."

Tama gasped. "*What?*" she yelled. "I'm not going to give Nala the Unyevu disease! You're crazy!"

"You *have* to do it," Hila informed her. "Otherwise that means that Simba forfeits this test, meaning that he forfeits the Royal Challenge, meaning that I get the kingdom. So, it's your choice: give Nala the Unyevu disease, or give the kingdom to me."

"You can't make her do that," said Mufasa, glaring at Hila. "This is wrong."

Sarabi was going to agree with her mate, but then fainted again, slumping to the ground.

"What's the Unyevu disease?" Nala asked, a worried look on her face. She didn't think it was going to make her invincible... Probably the opposite.

Hila opened his mouth to answer, but Haiba got there first. "It's a deadly disease," Haiba explained. "Although it's not as rare as other illnesses – such as the Kulaani illness – it's still pretty uncommon. You can only catch it by eating a poisonous plant. Either that or get someone with magical powers to infect you with it. But why you would want someone to do that, I have no idea—"

"So what does it do?" Simba asked, staring at Haiba.

"Once a person becomes infected with the disease, it begins to slowly drain them of their life energy over a short period of time. The person just gets weaker, and weaker, and weaker, until... they're dead," Haiba explained, causing everyone to gasp. Well, everyone but Hila, who was chuckling to himself.

Nala turned to Hila. "But why would you want Tama to infect me with that?" she asked. "What's that got to do with this stupid Royal Challenge?"

"Because in the test of courage, you have to rescue someone from the Cliff of Impending Doom – as you can guess, King Ahadi named it that – in a certain time, otherwise the person will die because of the illness."

"Wait, so King Ahadi knew someone with magical powers?" said Haiba, sounding a little surprised. "What was his name?"

"Oh, I can't remember," Hila replied. "I think his name started with a 'H', but that's not the point right now. We need to get on with the final test of the Royal Challenge."

"So where's the Cliff of Impending Doom?" Simba asked. "I get the feeling that it's not going to be very easy to climb..."

"Oh, you don't have to worry about climbing anything," Hila told him. "You just have to navigate the narrow curving path along the side of the cliff. Reach the top, find Nala before she dies, and you'll win. The cliff resides in the Outlands."

"Easy," Simba said. "Let's go there right now." He started to walk off.

"Ah, ah, ah," said Hila, pushing Simba back. "I haven't explained it all yet. You're going to be racing against *me*. And it *is* a race this time, Simba – unlike the test of skill. If you get to Nala before I do, then you get to rule the kingdom when you're older. However, if *I* get to Nala before *you* do, then the kingdom is mine, and Nala will become my Queen."

"Never!" Nala declared, glaring at Hila angrily.

"Well, if you don't..." Hila mimed slitting someone by the throat. "Sorry about that. Pride Landers' law."

"Yeah – *your* version of it," Nala retorted. She didn't care whether she lived or died – she was *not* marrying Hila! She would only marry out of love. That was one of her personal promises. And right now she loved Hila about as much as she loved having her head slowly ripped off: not at all.

"Oh, whatever." Hila didn't have time for this. "Tama, just give her the Unyevu disease. Maybe then she'll shut up. I'll be teaching her a serious lesson later when I'm the new King."

"If Simba doesn't beat you," Nala muttered, looking down at the ground.

Slowly, and rather hesitantly, Tama made her way over to Nala. She looked at her apologetically. "I'm sorry," she said quietly. "I thought I left this kind of stuff behind. If I could get out of it then—"

"It's okay," Nala told her. "It's not your fault. Just do it. I know Simba will save me, anyway. He always does."

Tama took a deep breath, and tried to concentrate. "Here goes," she said, before putting a paw on the top of Nala's head.

The result was instantaneous. A green aura surrounded the outline of Nala's body, before she collapsed to the ground,

suddenly feeling very weak indeed. "Oh... I don't... What's happening?"

"Looks like it worked," said Hila, staring down at Nala. "She's only got about an hour before all her energy is drained, and she dies." He turned to Haiba. "Haiba, carry her up to the top of the Cliff of Impending Doom. Then we can start the test."

"There," Haiba said, as he walked down the sloping path that curved around the side of the Cliff of Impending Doom – a seriously tall cliff in the middle of the Outlands. "I've put her at the top. I'm not sure how long she will last, though. It's really hot up there."

Simba, Hila, Tama, Mufasa and Sarabi were gathered at the bottom of the cliff. "If she dies because of you, then you'll be very sorry," Simba warned Hila.

"Don't worry," said Hila. "I'll rescue her, and then she can be my loving mate. We'll grow old together, and have little cubs of our own."

"I don't think so," Simba stated, taking a step towards Hila, glaring at him, his eyes burning with fury. "If anyone's going to be Nala's mate, then it's me. You don't deserve anything. You're just pathetic."

"We'll see," Hila turned towards the cliff. "You ready?"

"Ready as I'll ever be," Simba replied, his eyes fixed on the sloping path. He had to get to the top and save Nala.

"Then the test will begin. One... two... there... *go!*"

Simba and Hila raced off as fast as they could. Using all of the strength he had, Simba got to the sloping path first, and started to make his way up the cliff, following the curving path as quickly as possible. Glancing behind, he could see Hila was right behind him. *Gotta go faster*, he told himself.

Looking down, Simba quickly realised that the path was narrowing. *It's getting smaller!* Simba realised. *Or am I getting bigger?* He shook his head. *Nah. That's just stupid.*

Simba craned his neck upwards, and saw that he was about three quarters of the way there. *Not long to go now*, he thought, checking to see how far back Hila was. He was quickly gaining on him, determined to win this race as much as Simba was.

Simba wanted to go faster, but the path was simply too narrow. Any faster and he would slip from the edge, tumbling to his doom. *Come on...* he thought, nearing the top of the cliff. *Come on...*

"Yes!" Simba cried, hopping to the top of the cliff. Nala was lying in the centre, looking seriously weaker. "Nala!" he cried, running over to her. "Are you okay?"

She looked up at him, and smiled. "Simba... I..." She closed her eyes, slipping away into unconsciousness.

"Oh, no," said Simba, his eyes widening in horror. "I've got to get her to—"

Suddenly, Simba was pounced on by Hila, landing hard on his back by the edge of the cliff. "You think you can beat me?" Hila snarled, his eyes blazing with anger. "Well, think again!"

"Get off me!" Simba shouted, pushing Hila away from him. "Nala's dying! I've gotta help her!"

"I don't care!" Hila slashed at Simba with his claws, striking him across the chest.

Simba cried out in pain, collapsing to the ground.

Hila laughed at the top of his voice. "The great and mighty Prince Simba, finally reduced to nothing!" He extended his claws, ready to tear Simba's throat open. "Don't worry, though, Simba. Nala will be perfectly safe in my care."

With an angry cry, Simba leapt at Hila, tackling him to the ground. They rolled about the place, finally ending up right on the edge of the cliff. Hila got on top of Simba, and tried to slash at his throat with his claws. "Stay still!" Hila ordered. "Listen to your King!"

Simba growled loudly, before exploding with anger. "You! Aren't! The! *King!*" He kicked Hila in the stomach, sending him sailing over the edge of the cliff. Simba heard him scream as he tumbled to his death.

Hila was gone.

Simba lowered Nala gently to the ground once he arrived at the bottom of the cliff. "Tama... you can heal her, right?"

Tama nodded. "Of course." She walked over to Nala, and put a paw on the top of her head.

A green aura surrounded her outline, and she gasped loudly, her energy restored. "Whoa!" Nala exclaimed, hopping to her paws. "Why's everything so slow around here?" she asked, looking at everyone. "Why don't you speed up a bit?" Nala started running around and around in circles.

"Oh, dear," said Tama, watching Nala as she ran around the place. "I seem to have given her too *much* energy. Looks like I haven't got these powers worked out after all." She shrugged. "Oh, well. She'll calm down in a few hours or so."

"Yippee!" Nala yelled, hopping and rolling around on the ground. "I can do anything! Wahoo!"

"Where's Hila?" Haiba asked Simba.

"He's gone," Simba replied. Haiba understood what he meant. "Still, at least that's the Royal Challenge over and done with."

"Exactly," said Mufasa, taking a step forward. "Now I can finally get rid of that tyrannical law. I'll do it personally this time. Zazu obviously can't be trusted. Isn't that right, Sarabi?"

Sarabi fainted again. Mufasa shrugged, not really surprised this time.

"What a day," Simba sighed as he walked into the den, with Nala and Haiba on either side of him. "I never want to do anything like that ever again."

"You can say that again," said Nala. "I can't believe that jerk thought I would marry him!" She stuck her tongue out. "Gross!" She smiled at Simba. "There's only one cub I'm interested in marrying."

Suddenly, a loud whimpering was heard coming from inside the den. "What's that?" Haiba asked, trying to determine where the noise was coming from. "Sounds like it's coming from in here."

Nala pointed at a large rock. "There," she said, wandering over to it. "Zazu?"

Simba and Haiba joined Nala by her side, and found Zazu cowering behind the rock, a fearful expression on his face. "What are you doing in here?" Simba asked.

"It was a nightmare!" Zazu cried, his eyes widening. "I'll never forget to abolish another law for as long as I live! Those monkeys... They don't just tickle people for fun. They're *experts* at it! First it was under the wings – they always do that. And then my stomach. Then my feet. *That* was the worst part!"

Zazu continued to cower and whimper behind the rock. The three cubs shrugged at each other, before walking off.

"I guess it serves him right for putting me in a deadly challenge," Simba said.

The three cubs laughed, knowing that they had overcome yet another trial.

However, a trial far worse was going to present itself. Ever so soon. And it was going to test them to the very limit, because Simba's worst enemy was about to resurface.

And this time, he had nothing to lose.

The End

AN: Foreshadowing! I think you all know who's making a comeback in the next story – because you are *ever* so clever readers!

NEXT TIME: Hago makes a shocking return, and Simba's whole life is torn apart.